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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to examine the independence-involvement approach to interpersonal communication as a method for assessing participant satisfaction in social interaction. The author provides definitions of satisfying social interactions in both empirical and value-oriented terms and further attempts to determine behaviors that both contribute to and inhibit the attainment of satisfying outcomes. Reviewing relevant literature, the author infers that the dimensions of independence and involvement may be fundamental factors in interpersonal communication. He defines independence as the degree to which interpersonal decision-making is self-imposed in contrast to an external locus of control. He defines involvement as the degree to which behavior shows concern or indifference towards others. It is hypothesized that behaviors leading to an appropriate balance of these two factors contribute to satisfying social interaction. The reported study lends support to the underlying importance of the independence and involvement dimensions. (Author/LG)

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AN ANALYSIS OF THE INDEPENDENCE-INVOLVEMENT APPROACH TO INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION

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The study of interpersonal interactions tends to emphasize relatively informal social situations in which individuals in face-to-face encounters sustain a focused interaction through the reciprocal exchange of verbal and nonverbal messages. Facilitative communication, one type of interpersonal communication, is not just a report of what is or has taken place, but is a method for encouraging or enhancing satisfying interaction. If we are to predict and understand satisfying social interaction, then it is valuable to know what factors in communication facilitate those outcomes.

The purpose of this line of inquiry is to formulate and test a model that, if verified, could assess the adequacy of social interaction. A thoroughly descriptive model would be useful in analyzing the present state of social interaction, but it would not reveal whether current practices were useful or harmful. This seems especially relevant in light of the voluminous outcry against current practices commonly found in social interaction. In a similiar fashion, models that simply assert that some practices are superior or beneficial but do not provide means for verification may also be misleading. Hence, this line of study attempts to define satisfying social interaction in both empirical and value-oriented terms, and attempts to determine behaviors that both contribute to and inhibit the attainment of satisfying outcomes.

Several authors in writing about interpersonal relationships describe basic underlying dimensions that may be related to satisfying interpersonal communication. Martin Buber writes of these in terms of distance and relation. He says, "Distance provides the human situation, relation provides man's becoming in that situation." [1] Thus independence or distance in the self and other is a prerequisite before any type of relation or involvement can be established or continued. Buber lends support to this idea when he says, "... one can enter into relation only with being which has been set at a distance, more precisely, has become an independent opposite." [2] Then distance or independence is the presupposition (follows from but is not seperate from) or relation or involvement which is assigned to the individuals who are interaction. Apparently, both of these factors are essential for satisfying interpersonal relationships. William Glasser suggests that interpersonal behavior concerns two basic psychological needs. These are "the need to love and be loved and the need to feel that we are worthwhile to ourselves and to others." [3] One's ability to love and be loved, according to Glasser, determines his level of health and happiness through life. The fulfillment of the love need however, is empty without a corresponding fulfillment of the need to be worthwhile. Individuals must develop standards of behavior that provide information that allows them to make corrections when off-course and to attribute credit when they do the right thing. Glasser notes that, "to be worthwhile we must maintain a satisfactory standard of behavior." [4] Hence, the resolution of feelings of worth and feelings of involvement with others appear to be fundamental in satisfying interpersonal contacts. Behaviors emerging from states of acceptance, congruence, and desire to understand form the basic network proposed by Carl Rogers. He defines congruence as, "the term we have used to indicate an accurate matching of experiencing and awareness. It may be still further extended to cover a matching of experience, awareness and communication." [5] Rogers then defines acceptance as:

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> . . . a warm regard for him (the other person) as a person of unconditional self-worth--of value no matter what his condition, his behavior, or his feelings. It means a respect and liking for him as a separate person, a willingness for him to possess his own feelings in his own way. [6]

Finally, he defines desire to understand as, "when someone understands how it feels and seems to be me, without wanting to analyze me or judge me." [7] The needs of inclusion, control, and affection are postulated by William Schutz as necessary and sufficient.

Schultz defines inclusion as the need to initiate interaction and to be the recipient of other's behavior to initiation interaction. Control refers to the decision-making process between persons and may range from allowing others to make every decision through always imposing one's own decision on others. Finally, affection is defined as acting close and personal toward others. [8] Schulz places these factors in the framework of the relationship when he says, "inclusion is concerned primarily with the formation of a relation, whereas control and affection are concerned with relations already formed." [9]

John O. Stevens describes "communication within" as the process we follow in decision making. He suggests that an internal conflict often develops between one's own experience and demands by others to falsify one's experience. For Stevens, the optimal solution to this situation is to be aware of what goes on within and then determine whether one really wants to comply or not. He writes, "In this way you can become more flexible, and free to act according to the actual situation and how you really feel." [10] Communication with others, Stevens suggests, is a matter of awareness of one's own experience and the ability and willingness to make others aware of one's experience. He reports that "When I am honestly myself and you respond to me as I am in that moment, I can receive this fully and know the satisfaction of being really related with you." [11]

Although the above authors describe the process a little differently, there appear to be some common concepts that cross all the formulations. All of the authors emphasize in one way or another the matter of independence. Buber writes of distance, Rogers of congruence, Glasser of worth, Schutz of control, and Stevens of communication within. This independence-dependence dimension decision making is self-imposed in contrast to an external locus of control. The second dimension that emerges from these authors is the concept of involvement. Again, Buber writes of relation, Rogers of empathy and acceptance, Glasser of love, Schutz of affection and Stevens of communication with others. The involvement-distance dimension apparently relates to behavior that shows concern for the other. Stated negatively, a lack of involvement, or distance would be synonymous with indifference toward the other. Thus, initially, it seems reasonable to hypothesize that the dimensions of independence and involvement may be fundamental factors that define satisfying social interaction.

In addition to these two factors, a regulatory principle seems necessary to assess the relative role independence and involvement play in directing an appropriate flow of interaction. In general, the principle states that an appropriate balance of independence and involvement is necessary for satisfying interpersonal communication. If one becomes too involved with another person then his sense of independence will be eroded and lead to dissatisfaction. Likewise, if one becomes too independent then his level of involvement with the other dissaptes and again the relationship becomes counterproductive. The

dimension of involvement and independence in conjunction with the regulatory principle may allow us to determine which behaviors lead to satisfying outcomes. A recent study by Lesh lends some support to this model.

A study by Angela Dawn Lesh investigated the relationship between self-esteem and satisfaction with interpersonal relationships. It was an effort to discover whether a training device designed to increase self-esteem would result in greater satisfaction with interpersonal relationships. Self-esteem was defined as the individual's evaluation of his worthiness. Stanley Coopersmith defined self-esteem as, "a personal judgment of worthiness that is expressed in the attitudes the individual holds toward himself. It is a subjective experience which the individual conveys to others by verbal reports and other overt expressive behavior." [12] For the purposes of this study, a satisfactory interpersonal relationship was defined as a dyad in which the communication could be characterized by the variables of congruence, unconditional regard, and empathic understanding. 'Satisfaction with interpersonal relationships' was defined, for the purposes of this study, by a score obtained on the Barrett-Lennard Relationship Inventory. [13] Barret-Lennard explains, "The Relationship Inventory is designed to measure four dimensions of interpersonal relationship, adapted from Rogers' (1957) conception of the necessary conditions for therapeutic personality change. [14]

Self-esteem for each subject [15] was based upon scores obtained from two scales The first scale was the short form of the Self-Esteem Inventory developed by Stanley Coopersmith. [16] The second scale used to assess self-esteem was the Harrison test which measured the individual's self-concept and his self-ideal. [17] Both of these scales were administered at the beginning and at the end of the training session. The findings which were computed only for the fifteen subjects who were rated on the Barrett-Lennard Relationship Inventory, indicate that there was a significant increase in self-esteem after the treatment.

It was hypothesized that if low self-esteem subjects experienced an increase in self-esteem then a positive increase in the Barrett-Lennard ratings would be obtained. An analysis of the results of this inventory utilizing the Wilcoxon sign test for differences between related samples yielded significant results in the predicted direction at the .01 level. It was found that an increase in self-esteem was associated with an increase in satisfying interpersonal relationships as defined by the Barrett-Lennard inventory.

A second part of the Lesh study was a factor analysis of how subjects in the groups perceived their fellow subjects.

At the conclusion of three group sessions (pre-, middle and post-) the subjects filled out questionnaires which indicated how they perceived themselves in the group and how they perceived two other subjects in the group for that session. The questionnaire included twenty-five semantic differential bi-polar scales. Scores were computed for each bi-polar scale based upon numerical assignment ranging from one to seven. The same questionnaire was used for the subject to rate himself and his perceptions of two other subjects in the group.

Due to missing data only the pre- and post- measures were utilized in the factor analysis of how the subjects perceived others in the group. Using a Varimax Rotation, five factors were generated. The results of this analysis

are reported in Table I.

The set of factors generated in this analysis appear to be useful as five descriptive variables regarding social interaction. Factor I suggests an element of involvement. This might be an indication of the depth and meaningfulness of the interaction. An individual reflecting on the social encounter could possibly characterize it in terms of whether or not he found it of personal value. Typical scales that loaded on Factor I were interesting-boring, dull-bright, and sincere-insincere. Factor II suggests an element of self-consciousness. This may be an indication of the degree to which one allows feelings of inadequacy about himself to intrude on or dominate the interaction. Such feelings are likely to be reflected in being relaxed or tense, or feeling shy or bold. Typical scales that loaded on Factor II were self-assured - self-conscious, relaxed-tense, and shy-bold. Factor III seems to indicate the element of spontaneity. This factor would be a reflection of the degree one plans and calculates his responses as opposed to being transparent and spontaneous. Typical scales that loaded Factor III were deliberate-impulsive, emotional-rational, and excitable-calm. Factor IV implies an element of cooperation. This implies whether one is willing to actively participate in the conversation as well as whether he is willing to reasonably consider the content of the interaction. Typical scales that loaded on Factor IV were tenacious-yielding, competitive-cooperative, and accepting-rejecting. Finally, Factor V suggests an element of independence. This may reflect whether or not an individual feels free to express or not to express his ideas or feelings on his own initiative as opposed to feelings of obligation, restraint and repression. A typical that loaded on Factor V was dependence-independence.

In an attempt to assess the significance of the factors, a treatment X subjects analysis of variance was run on the pre- and post- scores for each of the five factors discussed above. The results with regard to Factor I (involvement) and Factor V (independence) attained significance in the expected direction at the .01 and the .05 levels, respectfully. The post-scores were in the direction of increased involvement and independence. The results of this analysis of the pre- and post- scores on the remaining factors did not reach statistical significance. These findings, to the extent they are internally valid, lend some support to the notion that the dimensions of involvement and independence may be critical in assessing the adequacy of social interaction.

These results might have been obtained because the training sessions emphasized involvement and independence, more than self-consciousness, spontaneity and cooperation. All of the subjects while interacting in the training sessions were required to personalize all their statements by using I or me. Conversations which consisted of references to individuals or experiences outside of the training sessions were discouraged. Thus the subjects learned to be specific through external manipulation of their language which presumably resulted in the subjects internally feeling responsible for what happened to them. This emphasis on the self or self-involvement in their interactions resulted in the subjects disclosing more about themselves.

Enphasis on independence in the training sessions, it was assumed, occured as the subjects became more detached from outside forces of appraisal and relied more heavily on themselves in making judgments and appraisals. As long as the subjects' judgment of worth, ". . . was subject to the opinions, influence and authority or other person,"[18] little independence was experienced in their interactions. The subjects were required during the training sessions, to become involved in low risk situations, because, "low risk-taking, is taking a

TABLE I

FACTOR ANALYSIS OF HOW SUBJECTS PERCEIVED OTHERS IN THE GROUP

	I	II	III	IV	V
Close-distant	.58	-.41	-.15	.30	.02
Tenacious-yielding	.03	.14	-.07	.63	.16
Weak-strong	.31	-.61	.14	-.14	-.28
Happy-sad	.22	-.75	-.11	.27	-.10
Incompetent-competent	.64	-.29	.25	-.19	-.24
Deliberate-impulsive	.18	.18	.71	-.13	.25
Interesting-boring	.74	-.20	-.02	.11	-.04
Active-passive	.50	-.64	-.19	-.27	.01
Sincere-insincere	.66	-.14	-.12	.27	-.05
Self-assured--self-conscious	.08	-.81	.06	-.01	-.13
Open-closed	.47	-.63	-.17	.22	.06
Relaxed-tense	.03	-.72	-.04	.32	-.24
Dull-bright	.77	-.16	.07	-.09	.00
Dependent-independent	.09	-.35	.27	-.06	-.66
Cold-warm	.50	-.42	-.15	.54	.06
Extroverted-introverted	.13	-.81	-.05	.00	.14
Competitive-cooperative	.19	-.04	.03	.72	-.13
Attractive-unattractive	.60	-.24	-.00	.31	.15
Bad-good	.65	-.15	-.05	.46	.22
Emotional-rational	-.12	-.03	.75	-.14	-.17
Sensitive-insensitive	.68	.11	-.15	.28	-.25
Deep-shallow	.62	.14	-.16	.17	-.49
Excitable-calm	-.21	.03	.74	.22	-.19
Accepting-rejecting	.23	-.10	-.01	.80	-.08
Shy-bold	.02	-.82	-.00	-.15	.01

TABLE II

ANALYSIS OF PRE-AND PAST-SCORES WITH REGARD TO FACTORS I AND V

MEANS

	PRE	POST
FACTOR		
I	5.01	5.43
II	4.64	5.18

AOV

FACTOR I

Source	SS	df	ms	F	P
Subjects	14.01	21	-	-	-
Treatments	2.99	1	2.99	10.68	.01
Error	5.87	21	.28	-	-
Total	22.87	43			

FACTOR V

Source	SS	df	ms	F	P
Subjects	27.14	21	-	-	-
Treatments	3.28	1	3.28	4.90	.05
Error	13.99	21	.67	-	-
Total	44.41	43			

chance on something that has a high probability of success." [19] As a result of such positive experiences possibly the subjects begin to rely on themselves for judgments of worth. As the subjects experience more self-reliance or independence they are more able to do what they feel, and express their ideas or feelings on their own initiative.

Further, the design of the study (pre-post) without a control group weakens the internal validity of the study. Finally, several subjects voluntarily dropped out of the study, thus adding another element of uncertainty. All of these events require caution in accepting and interpreting the outcomes of the study. Nevertheless, the results are provocative and seem to encourage additional study and refinement of the independence-involvement approach to interpersonal communication.

IMPLICATIONS

Joseph Luft cites ten rules of appropriate self-disclosure. [20] These rules seem to be based on unstated assumptions of independence and involvement functioning within interpersonal communication. Examples of these rules of appropriate self-disclosure include: "When it occurs reciprocally", "When it concerns what is going on within and between persons in the present," both of these seem to suggest that the level of involvement and independence must be in balance in the relationship, and "When it is confirmable by the other person," which seems to suggest involvement of the individuals in the interaction. The model presented in this paper of involvement and independence in satisfying interpersonal communication would offer the means for testing Luft's previously unstated assumptions.

Another application of the independence-involvement approach is in the design of courses on interpersonal communication. Instead of treating the subject in terms of a series of somewhat unrelated variables, e.g., Reaching Out [21] or Encounter [22], one can focus on the effects of various behaviors on the independence and involvement dimensions and the regulatory principle. An instructive example of this is John Stevens book, Awareness. His section on "Communication within" describes a number of structured experiences that examine the indepencence dimension. The section on "Awareness" and "Communication With Others" relate structured experiences that explore the involvement dimension. When his book is placed in this framework it gives direction and focus to the course in interpersonal communication.

The purpose of this paper was to briefly present the independence-involvement approach to interpersonal communication. Independence was defined as the degree to which interpretation of events and interpersonal decision-making is self-imposed in contrast to an external locus of control. Involvement was defined as the degree to which behavior shows concern or indifference toward others. It was hypothesized that behaviors leading to an appropriate balance of independence and involvement define satisfying social interaction. The study reported here lends some support to the underlying importance of the independence and involvement dimensions. Additional studies are in progress using a different set of scales and different situations to investigate the generality of these dimensions. Also studies are being implemented to determine the relationship between self-disclosure and these dimensions.

Footnotes

[1]Martin Buber, "Distance and Relation," Psychiatry, 2 (1957), page 100.

[2]Ibid, page 97.

[3]William Glasser, Reality Theraphy, (New York: Harper and Row) 1965, page 9.

[4]Ibid, page 10.

[5]Carl Rogers, On Becoming A Person, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1961), page 339.

[6]Ibid, p. 34.

[7]Ibid, page 62.

[8]William C. Schutz, The Interpersonal Underworld, (Palo Alto: Science and Behavior Books) 1966, pages 18-25.

[9]William C. Schutz, Joy - 'Expanding Human Awareness' (Grove Press, Inc.: New York) 1967, pages 134-135

[10]John O. Stevens, Awareness: exploring,experimenting,experiencing, (Real People Press: Lafayette, Calif.) 1971, page 70.

[11]Ibid, page 88.

[12]Stanley Coopersmith, The Antecedents of Self-Esteem (San Francisco: W.H. Freeman, 1967), pages 4-5.

[13]G.T. Barrett - Lennard, "Dimensions of Therapist Response As Causal Factors in Therapeutic Change." Psychological Monographs, LXXVI, 43, 1962.

[14]G.T. Barrett - Lennard, "The Relationship Inventory: Revision Process," unpublished manuscript, University of Waterloo, Ontario, Canada, 1970.)

[15]The preliminary tests which included a short form of the Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory, the O.P.I. Inventory, the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale, and the Harrison test were administered to five hundred students enrolled in two introductory psychology classes (Psychology 1C), offered Spring Quarter, 1971, University of California at Davis. The students were asked to indicate if they would like to participate in training sessions designed to raise self-esteem. Approximately two hundred students indicated an interest in the training sessions.

The subjects selected from the above pool of two hundred students were thirty-seven men and women. They were selected from those whose score fell in the lower two-thirds on the self-esteem inventory (i.e., --those students possessing scores which indicated low or middle self-esteem.) (footnote-The

preliminary tests were administered and subjects selected by Donna Harrison, a Ph. D. candidate from the University of Michigan and a counselor at the University of California at Davis.) The rationale for selection of these individuals was that in order to obtain an increase in self-esteem the subjects must have the potential of raising their score.

It had been decided in advance that the groups should be limited in size to between eleven and thirteen, in order to more easily facilitate the training session. Three groups were formed with Ns of thirteen, eleven and thirteen. There were eighteen males and nineteen females in the study, the majority of them being freshmen and sophmores. An attempt was made to balance each of the groups for grade level and sex. Four subjects dropped out of the study and there was missing data on eleven others. Since the subjects were volunteers attendance could not be strictly controlled. The final number of subjects that remained in the sample was twenty-two, with the final Ns for the groups being eight, seven and seven. The Barrett-Leonard inventory was administered in two groups and the data for the factor analysis was taken from all three groups.

[16]Angela Dawn Lesh, "An Investigation of the Relationship Between Self-Esteem and Satisfaction With Interpersonal Relationships," unpublished Master's Thesis, California State University, Sacramento, 1971, Appendix A.

[17]Lesh, Appendix B.

[18]Coopersmith, page 217.

[19]James W. Tufts, "Methods of Changing Self-Esteem," unpublished manuscript, University of California, Davis, 1970, page 27.

[20]Joseph Luft, Of Human Communication, (Palo Alto: National Press Books), 1969, pages 132-133.

[21]David Johnson, Reaching Out, Prentice Hall, 1972.

[22]Gerard Egan, Encounter: Group Processes for Interpersonal Growth, (Belmont, Calif: Wadsworth Publishing Company, Inc.) 1970.